



San Diego City Attorney CASEY GWINN

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Community Forum Planned to Discuss Mid-City Community Court Proposal

San Diego, CA (October 20, 2000) -- The San Diego City Attorney's Office, in partnership with the Mid-City Community Court Steering Committee, will host a community forum next month to discuss a proposal to implement a community court in the Mid-City area of San Diego. Community members are invited to attend the forum to get information from various city and county agencies involved in this initiative. The forum will be held November 28, 2000, at 6:00 p.m., at the Blessed Sacrament Church Parish Hall, located at 4540 El Cerrito Drive.

In 1999, the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance awarded the City of San Diego a \$225,000 grant to plan a community court in the Mid-City area of San Diego. Mid-City was selected as the ideal location for San Diego's first community court because of the diversity of the population, the active participation of residents and business owners in the community, and the ongoing community revitalization efforts.

The proposed Mid-City Community Court will handle only misdemeanor quality-of-life crimes, such as prostitution, low-level drug offenses, vandalism, and graffiti, committed in the Mid-City area. Community members will be given the opportunity to serve in an advisory capacity to the court, providing the community with a voice in the criminal justice process.

The Mid-City Community Court Steering Committee is presently seeking input from community

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members, finalizing the court proposal, and securing a location and implementation funding for the court.

Community courts are being implemented across the country as long-term solutions to quality-of-life crime problems. Community courts adopt the philosophy of community justice, which involves communities and the criminal justice system joining together to enhance public safety.

Community courts ensure that offenders are held accountable to a community harmed by crime by requiring offenders to perform community service, including picking up trash, painting out graffiti, or planting trees. Community courts also require offenders to participate in rehabilitative programs, including drug and alcohol treatment, job training, and other programs, designed to stop chronic criminal behavior.

Community courts are now operating in Midtown Manhattan, New York; Hartford, Connecticut; Portland, Oregon; San Francisco, California; and West Palm Beach, Florida.

These courts are making positive contributions in their communities. Prostitution arrests in Midtown Manhattan dropped 63% between 1993, the year the Midtown Community Court opened, and 1995. Residents of Hartford, Connecticut have benefitted by more than 30,000 hours of community work service from offenders participating in their community court.

The Mid-City Community Court Steering Committee is composed of representatives from the City Attorney's Office, San Diego Police Department, San Diego Superior Court, San Diego County Health and Human Services, Office of the Public Defender, Mid-City for Youth, other community-based organizations, and community members. For additional information on the Mid-City Community Court initiative, please contact



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the City Attorney's Office, at (619) 533-5658.

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